ABSTRACT

[0087]   An image publishing system provides a distribution mechanism whereby images are forwarded automatically to users in accordance with a set of publication rules. The rules determine which images are to be sent to which users. The images are forwarded to users as they become available on an image archive storage device. This overcomes the requirement of users having to manually request the transmission of each individual image they would like to view. Progressive image streaming techniques employing compression are used to transmit images in encoded layers of increasing accuracy and quality. Means is also provided permitting users to view any image that is queued for transmission at a publication server, regardless of how much of the image has been received by a client computer. Thus, even images whose data transmission has not even begun yet may be viewed by a user. A user interrupts the normal background process at any time and requests to view a particular image. If the required data is not found locally, it is requested form the publication server and given high priority. The requested data is received, decoded and immediately displayed to the user.